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The Ribbono shel Olam Worries Constantly For Every Single *Yid*

**Our Benevolent Father Carries Us Lovingly Every
Moment**

He Looks Lovingly at You Always

The Ba'al Shem Tov writes: “A *Yid* must always be joyful, knowing and believing that the *Shechinah* is constantly with him and guarding him—that he looks toward the Creator, may His name be blessed, and that He in turn looks at him. **We must imagine that the Ribbono shel Olam looks constantly into our eyes—because He wants to take care of you.**

When we doze off, our eyes are closed. But the Ribbono shel Olam *never* slumbers nor sleeps; He's constantly looking at you with boundless love. He thinks: What's bothering this *Yid*? How can we care for him? How can we improve things for him? It's a gaze that is filled with mercy and compassion.

The eyes of Hashem, as it were, says the Ba'al Shem Tov, gaze at you 24 hours, seven days a week, with overwhelming love and concern. The problem is that *we* don't appreciate this—because, in our lexicon, when you say that someone worries about you constantly, we consider that he has myriads of other things on his mind. He has other needs that he must attend to—and a human being is incapable of focusing his mind on just one thing. But the Ribbono shel Olam can do *anything*. He can focus on you completely—as though there were nothing else in the world.

Why Don't I See It?

When we hear this, we may sometimes think of a thought that we're embarrassed to express: If the Ribbono shel Olam is truly constantly looking at me with complete focus, with compassion and love, how can it be that I am going through challenges and difficulties?

Of course, we don't know all the Heavenly calculations. And we know and believe that the Ribbono shel Olam is a טוב ומטיב, *He is good and He always does what is good for us*. But when such a thought comes to mind, it must awaken us to introspect—to realize that we have forgotten this reality. Because the rule is: the more we remember that the Ribbono shel Olam constantly concerns Himself about us, the more we will receive revealed *shefa*.

Your Father Is Carrying You Upon His Shoulders!

This *yesod* is brought by the *Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh* regarding the *pasuk* וּבְדַבָּר הַזֶּה אֵינְכֶם מֵאֲמִינִים בִּה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם, *and yet in this matter you do not believe in Hashem, your G-d (Devarim 1:32)*. Chazal tell us that Amalek came because the *Yidden* asked, הֲיֵשׁ ה' בְּקִרְבֵּנוּ אִם אֵין, *is Hashem among us or not?*" Says the *Midrash*, this is like a child who rides upon his father's shoulders—yet asks everyone he encounters, "Have you seen my father?" This causes his father great pain. **"You're riding upon my shoulders, and you're asking whether I'm even here?! I will cast you down, and the enemy will come and dominate you!** Then you will see that I was here all along, protecting you."

Similarly, Hashem had been carrying the *Yidden* עֲנֵי הַכְּבוֹד upon throughout their journey in the desert, and still they asked whether Hashem was among them! Thereafter, He allowed the enemy—Amalek—to come...

Don't Forget the Endless Kindnesses

The *Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh* provides an incredible insight into this *Midrash*—and every *Yid* who's alarmed when the *shefa* doesn't reach him should first learn this and understand that Moshe Rabbeinu is speaking to him!

Moshe Rabbeinu says: וּבְדַבֵּר הַזֶּה אֵינְכֶם מֵאַמִּינִים —“this thing” refers to all the kindnesses that the Ribbono shel Olam had done for them in the *Midbar*. And yet, **when they encountered a small problem, they forgot the incredible miracles that Hashem had done for them.** He carried them just as a father carries his young child on his shoulders.

You wonder why the *shefa* is withheld? Yesterday, you were given life, food, health, etc. Hashem arranged your every need with so much mercy and compassion and love. And now, when you experience a challenge (which probably originates from forgetting Hashem), and things aren't going as you want them to, **you forgot about the Ribbono shel Olam**, and you wonder where He is in your life.... **You're on My shoulders! —and you think I'm not here?!** If so, I will conceal Myself a bit more, so you will appreciate how much I had been in your life until now, shielding you from troubles.

Do We Doubt That Hashem Is Here?

This may sound a bit harsh, but we must study it, because it's the truth. Sometimes, a person experiences a problem. And he davens for it. But amid his davening, a thought creeps in... a feeling of ...בִּקְרַבְנוּ. He wonders, “Where is Hashem? I must remind Him about my problem.”

He doesn't say it out loud, and he doesn't say it as directly as those who say, “Where was G-d during the Holocaust?” He doesn't speak this way, *chas v'shalom*. But deep in his heart, he wonders, “I did this mitzvah. I performed this *segulah*... [he forgets about any *aveiros* that he may have done; he remembers only his good deeds], and he wonders: **How can it be that I should need to struggle this much?** I've davened so hard... and yet, I'm struggling.

He Doesn't Abandon You for a Moment

This is what the *pasuk* means when it says that we don't believe. We think such thoughts at the very moment that we're being carried upon loving shoulders. Reflect on the countless kindnesses that He is doing for us at this very moment! We're alive! We're walking around healthy!

We should be jumping for joy and gratitude when we recite אשר יצר for the kindness that we have just been given!—and these are just tiny examples of the thousands of kindnesses we experience throughout the day. **In this day alone, we have been given so much!** But because one thing didn't go as planned, we become bitter, saying, "How can this be? Why isn't the Ribbono shel Olam looking at me... I am such a good person...."

Such thoughts may cause the Ribbono shel Olam to conceal Himself, *chas v'shalom*. Not because He wants to punish us, but **because we forgot that we're riding on His shoulders**. Now, we must go through challenges—so we will remember that it was the Ribbono shel Olam Who had been watching us all this time.

The Ohr HaChaim is teaching us that when a person experiences a challenge, and he doesn't feel that the Ribbono shel Olam is looking at him and caring for him.... he's struggling for a long time, and nothing is moving, he should reflect and think that perhaps this is due to his thoughts of ...ה' בקרבנו. Of course, not *all yissurim* can be attributed to this—there are many Heavenly calculations that go into the concept of suffering—but this is a possible cause. When a person forgets that he's on his Father's shoulders, he may need to be reminded.

Remembering and Reiterating *Chasdei Hashem*

Thus, the *eitzah* for a *Yid* when he finds himself in a challenging situation is to think the exact opposite thoughts—as the further *pesukim* enjoin us.

The Torah tells us, "You're struggling with one area of your life... but look around at the thousands of kindnesses that you're given all day, every day. When you reflect upon them, when you awaken yourself to this truth, you will understand and appreciate that the Ribbono shel Olam never sleeps or slumbers—He doesn't forget about you for even one moment."

If so, we must understand that *everything* is for our good. We must always consider the fact that this challenge came because *we* forgot Him—

but the *Ribbono shel Olam* never forgets us. We must feel great serenity because the *Ribbono shel Olam* is guiding and leading us through every situation with tremendous compassion and mercy. He watches over us, He is concerned for us, and He assists us toward great success.

If You're Alive, You're Being Thought About

The Unconditional Heavenly Compassion

Here we must note a point about which many people are often mistaken. Sometimes, a *Yid* commits an *aveirah*, *R"l*, and he knows that he deserves a punishment for it, because he did something he shouldn't have. If so, he thinks, "How can it be that the *Ribbono shel Olam* still loves me and thinks about me? He surely wants nothing to do with me right now... He's ignoring me, because I have sinned...."

The answer to this mistake is found in the *Me'or Einayim* (*Parashas Yisro*), where the Rebbe urges us to think the following: **If I am alive right now, it must be that I am receiving sustenance and life from the *Ribbono shel Olam*—despite everything I have done.**

Of course, we must be greatly ashamed of our *aveirah*. But the reality is that we're continuing to receive life—and not just life, but health and countless other miracles. This means that the *Ribbono shel Olam* is busy with us. He is looking at us with sadness and pity.... We're indeed struggling with our specific problems... we're going through tremendous pain... but all around us is so much kindness—because Hashem constantly looks at us with mercy and compassion.

Your Very Life Is Proof

The *Me'or Einayim* is telling us that when a person does things he should not, he should continue to believe and daven, **because Hashem hasn't removed His gaze from him for one moment!** If you're ashamed, do *teshuvah*. But don't turn away. Look back at Him!

If it were true that the *Ribbono shel Olam* looked away from someone because of his *aveiros*, he wouldn't be alive right now! He wouldn't

merely have some peripheral problems—monetary or otherwise—his entire existence would cease! This is clear proof that the Ribbono shel Olam continues to look at all *Yidden* with great compassion and mercy.

The Father Who Waited at the Bench

There was sadly a *bachur* in Eretz Yisrael fell in with the wrong crowd and began rooming with them in an apartment in Tel Aviv. His heart-broken father gathered his *tallis* and *tefillim*, along with his linen, and sat down on a bench across the street from the apartment.

Then he called up his son, and said, **“You should know that I am sitting on the bench outside, waiting for you to return.”** His son replied, “You’re wasting your time. I’m not coming back.” But the father was unfazed. “I’m not telling you what to do. I’m informing you that I will wait here until you return home. I will not abandon you. I will eat and sleep here, and I will not budge.”

At first, the boy was stubborn. But every time he looked out of the window and saw his father sitting there, it tore at his heart. As much as he wanted his father to leave, he remained right where he was. This demonstration of a father’s love eventually won over... the boy broke down, his love was awakened, and he returned home.

We’re Afraid to Think About It

If we were to appreciate the truth about how much the Ribbono shel Olam sits and waits for us, even after we have sinned, this alone would cause us to do complete *teshuvah*! The problem is that we’re afraid to think of how much the Ribbono shel Olam continues to look after us! Because it’s not always comfortable to live with this thought.

Sometimes, it’s convenient to forget that Hashem neither sleeps nor slumbers. We may think that we would prefer it if Hashem didn’t look at us right now. “Now I want to let myself go... I want to enjoy some good food....” And then we wonder where the Ribbono shel Olam is in our lives. But Hashem says to us: **I am here the entire time; I am looking right at you with love and compassion.**

Let us remember that the Ribbono shel Olam watches every *Yid* constantly—because He wants to provide our *shefa*. Even if we have closed the door, even if we have run away and committed an *aveirah*, the Ribbono shel Olam remembers us throughout it all. He continues to want to help us. He is constantly here with us. Proof of this is that we're alive and well.

No Moment Without *Siyata DiShmaya*

The *Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh* in *Parashas Mishpatim* reveals an incredible *yesod*: **There's no moment or second that Hashem doesn't do something for a person regarding his body or his needs.** So long as a person is alive and his body is functioning, he is surrounded by miracles and love!—no matter what he has done! Hashem neither sleeps nor slumbers, and He never forgets us!

If a person *does* feel that Hashem has, *chas v'shalom*, abandoned him, he should understand: All that happened is that *he forgot* the fact that Hashem doesn't take a rest or a break from thinking about us. The person has moved away from the truth—either because he doesn't have the ability to comprehend that it is even possible for someone to focus on him so completely or because it's uncomfortable to contemplate such a thing.

This is why he ran away, and it is for this reason that he's feeling the concealment. Remember Hashem's constant Presence! Reflect upon it. And then you will once again feel the eyes of Hashem upon you.

Dovid HaMelech says, עיני ה' אל צדיקים, *the eyes of Hashem are upon the righteous*. They merit a special *Hashgachah*. Why? Because they in turn fulfill the verse, עיני כל אליך ישברו, *the eyes of all look to you with hope*. The more a person turns his eyes to Hashem—becoming aware of His Presence in his life—the more he will merit the eyes of Hashem upon him, and the more he will experience revealed good. This is also the principle of ה' צלך, *Hashem is your shadow*. He behaves toward us in the same measure as we do toward Him.

I Can Rest Assured; Someone Is Concerned About My Every Step

Friendly Reminders

An incredible *yesod* is brought in the *Kedushas Levi*, who is among our great masters and teachers in the area of *bitachon*. He writes in *Parashas Vayeira* that often, the Ribbono shel Olam will send us a *yeshuah*, a Heavenly smile—but it's not due to anything we did to earn it.

This salvation—whether a person earned a nice amount of money, he was spared from a certain dilemma, etc.—is expressly so that **we should see that the Ribbono shel Olam watches over us constantly**, and He doesn't remove His gaze from us for a moment.

The *yetzer hara* works very hard to ensure that even when we witness such *hashgachah*, **we should remember about it for 15 minutes, not more**. But the Ribbono shel Olam has compassion and mercy on us and therefore sends us big *yeshuos* so we shouldn't be able to forget this—so we should constantly be reminded that Hashem neither slumbers nor sleeps. If you have witnessed this, then you must remember it later on as well. You must rest assured that He will help you in other areas as well, even though you may not know when and how. Remember that He thinks about you constantly, and that He is watching you every moment.

Remember and Reflect

Thus, the *Chovos HaLevavos* is teaching us here that the reason we depend and rely on others is because we think that it's possible for them to keep us in mind—when the reality is that **no human being in the world is capable of thinking of us constantly**. A human being cannot possibly think about *anything* for 24 hours a day; only the Master of the World does this for each and every one of us.

But we forget this reality. We forget that ישן שומר ישראל, *our Guardian neither sleeps nor slumbers*. In fact, it's often more convenient for us *not* to think of this. And this, unfortunately, causes more concealment in many instances.

The *eitzah* for this, say the *sefarim hakedoshim*, is to constantly reflect upon the countless kindnesses that Hashem does for us constantly, in the past and in the present. **Think about how much good you have in this moment, amid all your challenges!** This will give you clarity to remember that He always remembers you, and if you learn this, you will have more *bitachon* in Hashem, and then things will automatically fall into place in all areas.

Daven, Then Trust

For this reason, Rebbe Pinchos of Koretz taught us that in some cases, when we find ourselves in a difficult situation, we shouldn't even daven—but focus *all* our energies on trusting Hashem. This is because davening can sometimes be used as a vessel to express pain, as though the Ribbono shel Olam doesn't know about our situation. This has the effect of distancing the person from the recognition that Hashem is constantly engaged with him.

If we find ourselves thinking such thoughts, we must “cast upon Hashem our lot”—throw our entire burden onto Him! We davened. Now, we must move forward with *bitachon*. The three *tefillos* that we daven every day bring great *berachah* and success—but we must emerge from our *tefillos* with serenity and trust. It's even okay to recite *Parashas HaMahn*, because it's part of davening. But if we find ourselves inclined to storm the Heavens even more, this may sometimes reveal erroneous thoughts.... The *ba'al bitachon* knows that the Ribbono shel loves him, He looks at him, and He knows exactly what he needs, **and He doesn't need my reminders about his problem.**

A Story About Water Permits

The following is a story that comes to us from a firsthand source; it emphasizes the point that after we have completed our *hishtadlus*, we must abandon all efforts—and we must simply hand the matter over to the Ribbono shel Olam's complete control (which we elaborated upon in previous *shiurim*).

A *Yid* built up a development of six homes, and he sold them to fellow

Yidden. The homes were completed and waited for their new residents. But here, they encountered a problem. The health department, for bureaucratic reasons, refused to grant them water permits. Understandably, no one was able to move into a home without water.

This went on for six long months! Every month, the developer incurred thousands of dollars in costs—in addition to the terrible aggravation and the harassment of the buyers who constantly badgered him about what will happen, questions for which he had no answers....

Refocus—Even When You Feel Sorry for the Person

This *Yid* did everything he could, calling every contact he could think of. He ran around government offices, from one person to the next. He tried every *segulah* and *tefillah*... but there was one thing he *didn't* try: distancing himself from the problem, refocusing, and giving the matter over to the Ribbono shel Olam.

It's a great *nisayon*—for a person may think: How can I distract myself from the matter when there are six very upset families who are depending on me to straighten the matter out? Isn't it my duty to keep working for them?

But the truth is that we must let go, even in such an instance. For as long as we tell ourselves that *we* can get it done, we're actively causing it *not* to be resolved. Thus, **the greatest favor he can do for the buyers is *not* to do so much!** If he won't distract himself from the problem, he's making matters worse for them, and prolonging their limbo.

Salvation from Distraction

Eventually, he decided that since the first way isn't working, he would try turning his focus away from the problem and then placing his trust in Hashem. It was a Sunday morning, and he made *one* phone call after davening. He didn't do a single thing the entire rest of the week; he left the matter in the hands of the Ribbono shel Olam.

That Friday, he got the long-awaited notice that the matter was re-

solved, the problem had been solved. The permits had been issued, and the residents were free to move in at last.

It is surely not an easy *avodah* to distract ourselves, especially when we're under so much stress. But if we make the effort—after davening and performing our *hishtadlus*—to put the problem aside, **we thus announce that the Ribbono shel Olam knows precisely what we need**, He looks into our eyes with love and mercy and compassion. **This alone has the power to bring the *yeshuah*!**

The person who distances himself from problems isn't cold or aloof to other people's needs. He simply understands the truth: **the best way to make things happen is by letting go and handing the matter over completely to Hashem**.... Someone is on the case! With this attitude and approach, *Yidden* are helped every day, with all kinds of *yeshuos b'ruchniyus* and *b'gashmiyus*.



Becoming Elevated by Distancing Ourselves from Lies and Dishonesty

Living with Lavan

In our *parashah* we learn about Yaakov Avinu's escape to his uncle Lavan in Charan. He was fleeing the wrath of his brother Esav. The question arises, what was the purpose in fleeing to Charan? Couldn't Esav pursue him there as well?!

In the *Sefer Galia Razah*, authored by one of the students of the Arizal, and published from manuscript form by the Be'er Mayim Chaim zy"l, he explains that indeed there was a deep purpose in sending Yaakov to Charan—for Esav was primarily envious of the spiritual *shefah* with which Yaakov had been blessed. By sending Yaakov to her brother Lavan, Rivkah was signaling to Esav, "You see, he's residing with a *rasha*, he's surely learning from his terrible ways, and he's squandering his great spiritual *shefa*. Thus, you have nothing of which to be jealous."

Indeed, the tzaddikim tell us that Lavan—who hailed from the side of *tumah*—did everything he could to topple Yaakov Avinu from his lofty spiritual state, and this was the deeper meaning in his attempts to swindle him so many times: He attempted to entrap him in the world of lies and deceit.

And that is precisely what Yaakov meant when he told Esav, עַם לִבִּי "עם גרתי ותרי"ג מצוות שמרתי, *with Lavan I resided, but I nevertheless kept all the mitzvot*." "Not only didn't he succeed in entrapping me in his world of swindling and dishonesty—but I also managed to draw out all the *mitzvot*, the holy sparks, that remained within Lavan. And as soon as my work was done, the Ribbono shel Olam commanded me to return home.

Loving Hashem with Our Money

As we see in the *parashah*, the *klipah* of Lavan was the *klipah* of dishonesty in money—so much so that the Torah refers to him as לבן הארמי, *Lavan the swindler*. This was his essence. When we look at the *nisayon* of Yaakov in the house of Lavan, we see that they center around the matter of money.

When a person is careful with the *kashrus* of his money, he is himself good and kosher. **The *nisayon* of honesty in money is a great one indeed—because it touches a very deep place in the person**—and thus, the level of one's honesty in money is a testament to his overall character.

Indeed, to fulfill ואהבת את ה' אלוך בכל מאורך, *to love Hashem with all our resources (money)*, isn't a simple matter at all. Just as we understand that loving Hashem בכל נפשך, *requires mesirus nefesh*, so too, בכל מאורך, *requires much sacrifice*.

A Ladder That Reaches to the Heavens

The *Ba'al haTurim* in the beginning of this *parashah* tells us that the word סולם (*ladder*, which Yaakov saw in his dream) has the numerical value of ממון, *money*. And many of the *sifrei chassidus* explain that money is like a ladder that has its feet on the ground and its tip reaches to the Heavens: **On one hand, money can drag a person down**—as tzaddikim taught us that the excessive pursuit of money borders on *avodah zarah*, and that this pursuit is the only remnant of the *yetzer hara* of *avodah zarah*, which was quashed by the Anshei Knesses haGedolah.

At the same time, if a person is careful to approach money the right way—he runs from the slightest whiff of dishonesty as from a fire—such a person is ראשו מגיע השמימה, he is truly on a lofty level.

We see people who look for workarounds that border on dishonesty in order to earn a bit more. But the harder it is to withstand the *nisayon*, the greater the reward for someone who overcomes this *nisayon*.

But we must remember that this is like a ladder we ascend rung by

rung. There are aspects of honesty in money that are more difficult than others—and a person must take one step at a time, ultimately reaching for the Heavens.

Quashing the *Klipah*

We see that Yaakov Avinu *after* being in the home of Lavan wasn't the same Yaakov Avinu who arrived there. Previously, Yaakov had been afraid of Esav. But now, it appears that he had no fear at all. The evil side had lost its grip. The *klipah* had been quashed. What changed?

What changed was that Yaakov was in the home of Lavan—and precisely there—in an environment filled with dishonesty and deceit—he remained true to who he was. While everyone around him behaved with dishonesty, Yaakov remained honest. This is an incredible level. It is one thing to remain *ehrllich* when we're at home, in our own environment, but it's another level altogether to keep one's integrity in an atmosphere steeped in dishonesty.

The **Tosher Rebbe zt"l**, in his *Sefer Avodas Avodah*, explains that this is why Yaakov Avinu first needed to remain in the academy of Shem v'Ever for fourteen years to toil in Torah—because in order to prevail over the forces of *tumah* in the house of Lavan, he needed to fortify himself with holiness and loftiness in order to withstand it.

Exaggerations Are a Form of Dishonesty

Our world has become so accustomed to accepting exaggerations and misrepresentations. It has become customary to write and report in dishonest ways, without batting an eyelash. He knows, and everyone knows, that things are exaggerated... but this goes on.

We must take heed and pay attention to the things we say, to the exaggerations that we're accustomed to telling. Today, it's normal to say, "It took me two hours to get here!" when, in reality, it took an hour and a quarter. Why are you saying two hours? Such a person will likely misrepresent in the same way when it comes to money—and we must work to rectify this area, step by step.

We Don't Lose from Telling the Truth

The *nisayon* is even greater when we see that a customer is ready to buy something inferior at a higher price—and often, there is a great deal of money on the line. Take the courage and be honest. Tell him, “I must tell you that this is of inferior quality and may break more easily.”

Don't be entrapped by the *yetzer hara* of dishonesty.

The same applies to the question of when goods will be ready for pickup. The customer wants to know when it will be ready, and the seller says, “*Im yirtzeh Hashem*, after Shabbos.” Why would you say something that you know to be impossible? You know that it won't be ready that soon, so why say that it *will* be? **This is the *klipah* of dishonesty—which lowers a person into the depths**, and we must battle it with all our might. We must not emit a word from our lips that isn't true. Sometimes we think that we will lose out by being honest, but the truth is the opposite. We never lose from telling the truth.

Becoming Elevated Through Honest Money

In our times, mischaracterizations and misrepresentations are so prevalent—“because it's only a little bit fudging the truth.” This is a *klipah* that must be crushed. **Yaakov Avinu had to bring forth twelve שְׁבַע הֵי, but he could not do so until he had withstood this test!** “Let Lavan the swindler do whatever he wants; I will remain the same Yaakov as before.” And as soon as he withstood this test, Esav lost control over him. **A *Yid* who runs from dishonesty cannot be defeated. When a person runs away from the *klipah* and learns to be an honest person, HaKadosh Baruch Hu will protect him.**

We must *daven* very much for this and toil for it mightily—and simultaneously remember the words of the aforementioned *Ba'al HaTurim*, who likens money to a ladder that is rooted in the ground but whose tip reaches to the Heavens; **just as it can lower a person into the depths, money also has the ability to raise a person to great heights.** This is what the *Ba'al HaTurim* is telling us—and we must take awe-inspiring *chizuk* from this. **When we see to what depths people stoop for a couple**

of dollars, we can understand from this what heights we can attain when we approach money properly.

A person who succeeded in being honest should give a *kiddush* in shul that Shabbos! When asked about this, he will answer vaguely, "It's for all the *chessed* that Hashem has done for me." But his heart will throb with gratitude for his ability to withstand the *nisayon*. He could have taken unkosher money, but he overcame his *yetzer hara* and stayed away from it.

Friends Who Guide You in the Proper Path

Indeed, the *yetzer hara* has many messengers who encourage the person in the wrong path. They will talk a person into being dishonest with money. They will tell him, "Do so and so... *everyone* does it.... I'm telling you, don't be a fool; it's an incredible opportunity."

Such friends can ruin a person's life! **Chazal** have told us that there are two types of friends a person can have. And so, if a person gets advice from friend, he should examine them: Are they like the friends of Na'aman who healed him from his leprosy or are they like the friends of Rechavam the son of Shlomo HaMelech, who caused him to lose his kingdom, ultimately leading to the *Churban Beis HaMikdash*.

Often, a person has a dilemma. People encourage him to take a certain step. Should he do it or not? He must ask himself, who are these friends? One must take stock of who these friends are who are advising him to take fateful steps in life. One must ensure that his friends are guiding him towards bliss and long-term satisfaction, and not, *chas v'shalom*, the opposite.

Withstanding this *nisayon* brings a person so much good, elevating him as few things can. Every unkosher penny that he refrains from taking comes back to him manifold—not only in a material way, but also spiritually.

Any person who can raise his ten fingers after 120 years on this earth and is able to say, "I lived in a world filled with lies and dishonesty,

but I didn't lie, and I didn't earn my money in dishonest ways" —such a person is on a lofty level indeed.

It requires much *tefillah* and much toil for us to truly be able to say this—and the Ribbono shel Olam will surely help us, for "one who comes to purify himself will surely be aided from Above."

